UNITED NATIONS **S**

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1996/919
8 November 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 8 NOVEMBER 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF RWANDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to inform you, and through you, the members of the Security Council and the entire international community, about the readiness and disposition of the Government of Rwanda to welcome all Rwandan refugees who are in refugee camps under humiliating conditions in Zaire and in other parts of the world.

May I further inform the international community that the Government of Rwanda has made it public, in an appeal to the Rwandan refugees and to the international community, that all Rwandan refugees are warmly welcome in Rwanda.

The text of the appeal by His Excellency Mr. Pasteur Bizimungu, President of the Republic of Rwanda, issued at Kigali on 4 November 1996, states:

"Appeal to Rwandan refugees, the belligerents and the international community

"Rwanda needs the unity of all its people to build a peaceful country, where every Rwandan citizen is accorded his rightful place, with equal rights and responsibilities for everyone. I therefore want to appeal to the refugees to return home. The country is eagerly waiting for you and we are fully prepared. There is no reason why you should continue to languish in refugee camps, suffering the humiliation of exile. Your home is right here in your country, and that is where you belong.

"I am also appealing for an immediate ceasefire, to allow for the smooth-running of the humanitarian action, in an atmosphere of freedom where everybody can make appropriate decisions for his future.

"For those assisting us, particularly the international community, we are waiting for authentic gestures of solidarity in this undertaking. We are calling upon you to join us in this process of the repatriation and resettlement of our compatriots. We are appealing for a joint action to be carried out with full dignity and respect for our people returning home."

The Government of Rwanda would like to dismiss the impression that has been created to the effect that Rwandan refugees cannot return. In this regard, we would like to state that according to our records more than 2.1 million refugees have returned to Rwanda since 1994 and they are happily settled in their respective communities inside Rwanda. Sources of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) indicate that between 1.4 million and 1.6 million refugees have already come back to Rwanda since 1994.

In view of the above appeal by the President of the Republic of Rwanda and taking into consideration the plight of the remaining refugees in exile, the Government of Rwanda is now working very closely with UNHCR and other United Nations agencies in Kigali in order to prepare for convoys of returning refugees at the Rwanda/Zaire border.

We appeal to the international community to provide humanitarian assistance to the returning refugees inside Rwanda, including the provision of housing, medicine and other requirements necessary for rehabilitation.

I would be grateful if you would circulate this letter as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Gideon KAYINAMURA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
of Rwanda to the United Nations